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TAGS: PREL MOPS NATO AF PA GG RU FR
SUBJECT: USDP EDELMAN DISCUSSES AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN,
RUSSIA AND GEORGIA

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reas
ons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On September 12, USDP Edelman and Counselor Eliot Cohen met with Philippe Errera, Strategic Affairs Advisor to FM Kouchner; Francois Richier, Strategic Affairs Advisor to President Sarkozy; and Michel Miraillet, Director of Strategic Affairs at the MOD, to discuss Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and Georgia. The French agreed that civilian casualties, a re-emergent insurgency and a weak national government are important challenges for the international community in Afghanistan. The French Government anticipates Parliamentary approval on the September 22 vote on ISAF troop deployments. The French judge that the lack of a functioning administration in the federal tribal areas of Pakistan has allowed the Taliban and Al-Qaeda to create "safe havens" and the Pakistani government is not capable of dealing with this threat within their borders. On Iran, the French are worried about keeping pressure on the government in Tehran. USDP emphasized that in Georgia, the international community should focus on: the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia proper and lowering the number of troops in the disputed regions; ensuring that the EU observers have full access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia as well as the buffer zones; and resolving the question of participants at the October 15 discussions. Miraillet also provided a status update on European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and proposed the next bilateral exchange for Washington in November. End Summary.

AFGHANISTAN COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

¶2. (C) USDP began all the meetings by expressing condolences for the August 18 death of 10 French soldiers in Afghanistan. The USG greatly appreciates the "exemplary" reaction of the French President and other leaders who have reinforced the importance of the NATO mission in Afghanistan in their public messages. He said that following the Gates-Morin phone call, the Defense Department has worked hard to get French forces the additional 50 communications radios they require, which were to be delivered on September 15. USDP emphasized that the challenges in Afghanistan are long-term and include battling illiteracy, corruption and narco-trafficking in addition to the reemergence of an insurgency that has led to a growing concern about personal security among the Afghan population. To assist, President Bush recently announced the shifting of some 5500 U.S. forces from Iraq to Afghanistan. In addition, U.S. General David McKiernan who is the Commander of ISAF will also take over responsibility for Operation Enduring Freedom, to ensure more coherence and

cooperation between the two. Richier acknowledged that France has been informed about this change of command and had no problem with it.

¶3. (C) Errera agreed with the U.S. assessment and said that Afghan President Karzai is losing political support and either does not realize it, or does not know what to do about it. Elections next year will be difficult, as it is possible that Karzai could be re-elected with a weak mandate, or through the result of elections that are not free and fair. Postponing elections is also not an option. In addition, the GOF is focused on the issue of reconciliation. To Paris, this is not a question of "negotiating with terrorists," particularly as many of the groups are not centralized and we do not want to treat them as a single adversary. Errera suggested that the U.S. and France consult closely on insurgency issues, to make sure our analyses are in sync. USDP acknowledged that some element of reconciliation should be pursued and added that we had seen positive developments in regions such as Khost and Nagahar, which have good local governors. Errera and Richier raised the increasing problem of civilian casualties and USDP acknowledged the issue and said that there will be a reinvestigation of the recent claims from Shindand province. Miraillet said that President Sarkozy's last meeting with Karzai was "difficult," and in that meeting French Ambassador to Afghanistan Ponton d'Amecourt had criticized National Director of Security Saleh for his failure to share information. Sarkozy has said from now on this had to change. Miraillet said that during that meeting, Karzai noted straightforwardly that "for the first time, Afghanistan was surrounded by the Taliban," the tactic that the Pakistani ISI taught the Taliban during the Soviet

era. Miraillet questioned whether our own intelligence sharing could improve, asking how coordinated our ground intelligence is and suggesting that the French have also had difficulties with the UK in that respect. Richier informed USDP that he, together with Sarkozy's Chief Military Advisor Admiral Guillaud will travel to Afghanistan and then Pakistan the week of September 15 to focus on lessons learned from the August 18 incident (which caused the loss of 10 French soldiers) and expressed appreciation for that day's phone call between General Petraeus in Baghdad and Guillaud.

¶4. (C) Richier was focused on the upcoming parliamentary debate on September 22 to vote on French deployments (a new constitutional requirement). While the President's party has a majority in the parliament and the GOF is not worried about the outcome of the vote, they do expect an active debate on the international community's strategy in Afghanistan (to include counternarcotics, corruption, etc.) The vote will be a straight up and down vote of approval, with no opportunity for MPs to add conditions or caveats to the existing deployment. Nonetheless, said Richier, France now "owns the problem" and has to look more closely at "how to fix it" including answering questions about civilian deaths, continuing drug smuggling, etc. Miraillet said that France is likely to increase its deployment of UAVs and helicopters, but that Special Forces are unlikely to be deployed in the near-term. Richier pointed out, however, that it remains easier for France to supply additional troops than additional funding for reconstruction. Richier also raised the need to get the story out publicly, lamenting the bad experience of the French-Algerian war. He asked for U.S. views about managing the the "strategic communication" message, recognizing the need to better inform the French public about events.

PAKISTAN POLITICS and CAPACITY

¶5. (C) USDP addressed the problem of Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters who are using safe havens in Pakistan to operate along the border. This has led to a big increase in activity in RC-E and we are seeing better organized fighters capable of engaging in larger and more sophisticated operations. Unfortunately, the Pakistan government is pre-occupied with

its political and economic problems. Counselor Cohen added that the administrative system in the federal tribal areas within Pakistan (FATA) has collapsed and the Pakistani military is unwilling to accept the assistance it needs to control the insurgency within its borders.

¶6. (C) Miraillet said that the GOF at all levels sees as "crystal clear" the links between Pakistan and Afghan stability. However, the French are frustrated by their lack of "tools" and their limited relationships in Pakistan. He described Zardari as "nothing," and stated his belief that rivalry will dominate Pakistani politics in the near term, with Sharif headed for the Prime Minister slot. The army's situation has gotten worse in the last 6 months, and a new season of terrorism lies ahead, which may be exploited by elements of ISI. Miraillet noted that a trilateral intelligence exchange involving the U.S., France and the United Kingdom could be helpful.

WORRIES ABOUT IRAN

¶7. (S/NF) USDP stated that the efforts by the EU and the U.S. Treasury Department are having an effect: the Iranians are having greater difficulty moving their money and that is making life more difficult. However, with recent developments in the Caucasus, the west cannot count on Russia's support to increase pressure on the Iranian regime, even if it is in their best interests as well. USDP said the USG is looking to see what else we can do outside the UN Security Council, such as going after subsidiaries doing business in Iran and looking at proposals about insurance and re-insurance as levers. Errera agreed and said that the best hopes are to coordinate national measures outside of the EU, as it is extremely difficult to get consensus at 27. Miraillet later expressed doubts that Italy will be tough enough on Iran or on Russia. Richier agreed on the need for economic measures and highlighted the utility of possible

sanctions on export of spare parts for Iran's oil and gas production.

RUSSIA-GEORGIA CONFLICT

¶8. (C) USDP expressed gratitude for the role French President Nicolas Sarkozy is playing to help resolve the crisis in Georgia. The international community must now ensure that Russia abides by its commitments. In particular, he said that we need to keep pushing on withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia proper and also on their increased troops in the two breakaway regions. The EU observers must be able to conduct their mission throughout Georgia, including within South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Finally, the USG is paying particular attention to the role of officials from the two disputed territories in the October 15 international discussions. It is important that if representatives attend, they cannot have flags or other status as independent nations. Errera agreed with our approach, saying the French agree on complete Russian withdrawal (with withdrawal from Georgia proper as the first step) and that the EU observers should have full access, even if they deploy first only in the buffer zones. Miraillet noted that France is prepared to contribute up to 200 gendarmes to ensure on-time deployment of the 200-strong EU observer mission. The French noted that there would be a Political Directors meeting during the week of September 15 in Washington to discuss the sensitivities of South Ossetian and Abkhazian participation in the October 15 discussions. USDP reinforced the importance of unity, within the EU, within NATO and within the transatlantic relationship, as the Russians try to push their agenda by driving wedges within the transatlantic community. Miraillet noted that Russia also has leverage within the EU, such as its offer to contribute 4 helicopters to the EUFOR mission in Chad. Miraillet said the contribution of only 4 helicopters reflects Russia's own military shortfalls, but said the EU

still needs those 4 helicopters. He described Russian leadership as "good poker players."

¶19. (C) Miraillet said that while Georgia has provided a good opportunity for a strong show of EU unity, including rapid deployment of an ESDP mission, that some Russian statements have been "blows" to undermine the diplomatic effort. While expressing optimism about French-brokered Russian withdrawal and EU observer mission gaining access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, he noted potential for further hot points, such as Ukraine's continued relationship as an arms supplier to Georgia that could provoke Russia into taking action on the Crimea. He called Belarus' "measured" response to the crisis in Georgia very interesting, as Moscow could return to being the capital of an "empire" by re-attaching Belarus to Russia.

Looking forward, he noted that Russia will likely be unable to fulfill its commitment on gas delivery to Europe by 2012. As a result, Moscow will continue to seek to strengthen its grip on gas reserves. In the region, he noted that Turkmenistan has commitments to Russia, as well as to China, Total, and Chevron. Miraillet observed that Russia would likely take a tough line against Turkmenistan if Ashgabat were unable to fulfill its Russian commitments. He said we were in "wait and see" mode, but encouraged us not to overestimate the impact of economics on Russia's flexibility.

¶110. (C) Miraillet asked whether NATO Membership Action Plans (MAP) for Georgia and Ukraine were still a short-term priority for the U.S. He noted that Russia acted against Georgia despite very strong statements from NATO at the 2008 Bucharest summit, and suggested that public opinion would be heavily opposed to MAP for Georgia now. He called the NATO-Georgia Commission symbolically important, but implied that NATO-Ukraine's relationship will be more hollow in light of Georgia developments. Miraillet said that Ukraine wished to contribute to the EU observer mission in Georgia, but that France is pushing for EU members only.

ESDP

¶111. (C) Miraillet said that the UK and France have coordinated closely regarding the French EU Presidency's European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) goals, but that Gordon Brown and the Labor Party's loss of political capital

has made the UK a weak partner. He said the French efforts to strengthen ESDP are focused on two areas, the European Security Strategy (ESS) and capacities. The European Security Strategy will be overhauled, representing a compromise between the "European Defense White Paper" requested by High Representative Solana and a mere update of the existing ESS. Miraillet said the Germans forced the compromise with their nervousness about what a White Paper might say about Russia. Miraillet said that on the capacities front, the October 1-2 Informal Defense Ministerial will be critical, with discussion of a French-drafted non-paper featuring 7 priority areas, each of which will be introduced in the discussion by a different member-state (for example, the UK will introduce naval de-mining). Miraillet said the French will also hope for progress on the establishment of an "Erasmus" military exchange program and the creation of a strategic (not operational) planning center in Brussels. He reiterated that France does not want a Euro-SHAPE, but something "modest" along the lines of the existing Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC). Noting that the French EU Presidency does not have much time, he said France will work pragmatically beyond its Presidency to address those needs. USDP noted that the U.S. would like to make in-kind contribution to the French-UK helicopter trust fund, such as indirect support via the Czechs.

PIRACY IN SOMALIA

¶12. (C) Richier briefly raised the issue of addressing Somali piracy. He said France has one frigate in place and will look at a rotation once the French hostage situation is resolved (which has since occurred). He raised the possibility of enlarging the NATO Standing NAVAL Maritime Group (SNMG) to include fighting piracy in its mandate. He emphasized that France has no/no opposition to a NATO tasking.

U.S. TRANSITION

¶13. (C) USDP suggested to Miraillet that in light of the upcoming U.S. transition, similar exchanges between the Pentagon and the French MOD should be institutionalized on a once- or twice-annually basis, with the participation of the State Department and French MFA. Miraillet expressed his support for the concept, which he said he would float with MFA colleagues. He noted that his "good friend" Jacques Audibert, new MFA Director of Strategic Affairs, would be in Washington in October or November. Miraillet also noted that he and Audibert would both be in Washington in November for a nuclear future exercise, along with members of the White Paper Commission such as Therese Delpech, and that perhaps a more formal meeting could take place on the margins.

¶14. (U) This message was cleared by USDP Edelman.

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